

**Commissioner Deborah A. Gist's Weekly Field Memo**  
**Friday, August 26, 2011**

**Notes from Commissioner Gist:**

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7. Registration open for beginning-teachers sessions; RIDE seeks names of [beginning teachers](#) from all districts
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**Other:**

13. Teachers invited to participate in survey on [teacher preparation](#)

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**Action Item Calendar**

**Wednesday (August 31):** Certification-renewal deadline  
September 2: Deadline for Education Leadership Council nominations  
September 16: Deadline for nominations for Rhode Island Teacher of the Year

September 23: Erate funding forms due  
November 15: Deadline for final selections of District Teachers of the Year

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***Notes from Commissioner Gist:***

**1. Streamlined District Teacher of the Year application posted**

As I've noted to you in recent Field Memos and at the RISSA Membership Meeting earlier this month, I would very much like to see a 2012 District Teacher of the Year selected from every district in Rhode Island. Having a District Teacher of the year will be a wonderful way for us to honor all of our outstanding educators. Initially, we established a September 16 deadline for District Teachers of the Year, which will enable these candidates to be eligible for the 2012 Rhode Island Teacher of the Year. Many districts have already started (or completed) the selection process. If you cannot make the September deadline, I encourage you to select a District Teacher of the Year by November 15, using a streamlined selection process. We have posted a sample streamlined application on the RIDE Web site for your use. We recommend that you establish a committee and a process for helping with the selection of your District Teacher of the Year. The streamlined application is posted here:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/Recognition/default.aspx>

**2. Emergency Management Agency issues schedules conference calls with superintendents**

Thank you for participating in the R.I. Emergency Management Agency (RIEMA) conference call for superintendents on preparations for the expected strike of Hurricane Irene on Sunday. Governor Chafee today declared that a state of emergency is in effect.

The RIEMA has agreed to schedule another conference call with superintendents at 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Saturday), to help guide you in your decisions about cancellations. The call-in number and the pin number will be unchanged from the numbers RIEMA sent you earlier today.

Please continue to stay in contact with your local EMA coordinator as you decide whether to open schools for students and staff on Monday. We are all hoping that this expected storm will bring minimal damage, that all Rhode Islanders will stay safe and secure, and that we can get the 2011-12 school year off to a great start next week.

**3. BEP provisions on seniority-based assignments applies to teachers, teaching assistants**

I've recently received some questions on the Basic Education Program (BEP) regulations and seniority-based hiring, particularly regarding the scope of the [advisory letter](#) I sent to you on October 20, 2009 ("Basic Education Program and Seniority-Based Teacher Assignments"). In that advisory, I noted that "no system that bases teacher assignments solely on seniority can comply with [the BEP]." Some have asked whether the prohibition against assignments based solely on

seniority applies to teaching assistants as well. The answer is: Yes. The BEP requires LEAs to “establish a set of policies and an array of strategies to recruit, hire, and retain highly effective district and school personnel” and goes on to say that these policies and strategies shall “focus on screening methods for determining candidate knowledge and skills to match the needs of the LEA” and shall “address staffing low-performing schools with highly effective and experienced staff.” (G-15-2.2) These provisions apply to all instructional staff, including teaching assistants. In fact, in my advisory letter I noted that I was sending the letter “to ensure that you have a system in place ... for assigning highly effective teachers and teaching assistants according to student needs.” Our goals remain the same: to ensure educator excellence in every school in Rhode Island, to advance student achievement across the state, and to close our achievement gaps. To achieve these goals, we need to work together to ensure that we support excellence across the entire instructional staff.

#### **4. High-school students encouraged to apply for Senate Youth Scholarship Program**

Juniors and seniors from your high school(s) are eligible to participate in the 50th Annual United States Senate Youth Scholarship Program. All 50 states offer this program, and Rhode Island has participated for many years. Each state selects two students to represent their state for a week of special activities in Washington, D.C., where the students interact with elected officials and with people in top government positions. Each student selected will also be awarded a \$5,000 scholarship. The students we have selected to represent Rhode Island have always reported that they enjoyed a unique and valuable educational experience. I hope you will share this information with your high-school leadership and that they will encourage students to participate in this valuable program. Information on the program is posted on our Web site, at:

[Application  
More information here  
http://www.ussenateyouth.org/](http://www.ussenateyouth.org/)

We will send notices about this program to high-school principals, school counselors, and social studies teachers.

#### **5. NBC News seeks participants in Teacher Town Hall**

As part of its annual series “Education Nation,” NBC News is scheduling a Teacher Town Hall for live broadcast on Sunday, September 25, at noon. Brian Williams will be the moderator. NBC News is inviting teachers in Rhode Island to participate in the conversation, by registering at:

[www.EducationNation.com](http://www.EducationNation.com)

This event sounds like a good opportunity for our teachers to discuss their ideas, experiences, and opportunities. Please feel free to share this invitation with educators in your district.

***From RIDE:***

#### **6. RIDE seeks proposals for 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Community Learning Centers**

Please see this notice from our Office of Student, Community, and Academic Supports:

A new RFP is now available on the RIDE Web site for our 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Community Learning Centers Program (21<sup>st</sup> CCLC). The 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC Program is a federally funded initiative to provide grants to schools, districts, or community or faith-based organizations to develop and implement high-quality, school-linked afterschool and summer programs for students from high-poverty communities and attending low-performing schools. There will be a Bidder's Conference on Friday, September 23, from 8:30-11 a.m., at the Radisson Airport Hotel, 2081 Post Rd., Warwick. Registration information can be found in the RFP, which can be accessed at the following here:

[http://www.ride.ri.gov/HighSchoolReform/cclc/21st\\_CCLC\\_2011-2012\\_RFP.doc](http://www.ride.ri.gov/HighSchoolReform/cclc/21st_CCLC_2011-2012_RFP.doc)

For further information, contact Jackie Ascrizzi, Program Manager, 222-8953 or Jackie.ascrizzi@ride.ri.gov.

**7. Registration open for beginning-teachers sessions; RIDE seeks names of beginning teachers from all districts**

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

We have been notified of more than 130 beginning teachers and we know there are more out there. Please keep sending your beginning-teacher information to us. Please remind your HR personnel or an appointed person to provide us with new hires (beginning teachers only) information by going to the following link:

<https://sites.google.com/site/riinduction/district-data-entry>.

If for some reason this link does not work for you, a spreadsheet is available to fill out and send back to RIDE. Please contact Hilda Potrzeba, at [hilda.potrzeba@ride.ri.gov](mailto:hilda.potrzeba@ride.ri.gov), to have the spreadsheet e-mailed to you. If your district uses the spreadsheet, please e-mail it back to [Hilda.potrzeba@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Hilda.potrzeba@ride.ri.gov).

To date, of the 130 beginning teachers entered in our system, only 5 beginning teachers have signed up for the September 1 Beginning Teacher Orientation. Beginning teachers must attend the orientation session. A second session for beginning teachers is open for registration on the RIDE Web site for September 29, from 4:30 - 7:30 p.m. Up to 75 beginning teachers can register for this session. Please provide your beginning teachers with this Web address below to sign up for a session:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/applications/ridecalendar.aspx>.

Thank you for your help; we need accurate counts for handouts.

Finally, please remind any principals in your district who will have beginning teachers in their building this year to sign up for the training. Their role is critical in beginning-teacher success as well as the success of this program. This is a formal training provided through Race to the Top funds by the New Teacher Center (NTC). A leadership trainer

will be coming from the NTC. All principals are welcome to attend. Registration is located through:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/applications/ridecalendar.aspx>.

Pre-registration is required for this session.

We wish you all a wonderful and successful school year!

As always, if you have any questions or feedback, do not hesitate to contact Hilda or Donna:

Hilda Potrzeba, at [hilda.potrzeba@ride.ri.gov](mailto:hilda.potrzeba@ride.ri.gov) or 222-8891;  
Donna Okrasinski, at [donna.okrasinski@ride.ri.gov](mailto:donna.okrasinski@ride.ri.gov) or 222-8982.

### **8. Certification-renewal applications due by Wednesday**

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

As we reported last week, it's the busy time of year in certification! Please help us by sharing the following information with your educators:

The processing time for educator-certificate applications is currently three months. For educators renewing their five-year professional or their one-year transitional professional certificates, there are no requirements other than completing the application form and paying the correct fee. Applications must be received at RIDE by **Wednesday, August 31**, or the educator will be charged a reinstatement fee.

Please note that if an educator is in "eval review" status in the RICERT system, that means we have received his or her application. We will process these applications in the order we received them. These educators are eligible to start the school year.

### **9. Evaluation training registration is open for Modules Two, Three**

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

Registration is now open for Module Three training for Rhode Island Model Teacher Evaluator Training. Evaluators can register by going to the eRide Workshop calendar, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/applications/ridecalendar.aspx>.

Please remind all teacher evaluators that they must register for Module Two.

The Rhode Island Model Teacher Guide is available on-line, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/EducatorEvaluation/Guides.aspx>.

RIDE is providing hard copies for all teachers, which will be available next month.

If you have any questions, please e-mail [edeval@ride.ri.gov](mailto:edeval@ride.ri.gov). We are still accepting district ISP applications; visit our Web site for more information:  
<http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/EducatorEvaluation/EdEvalAnnounce.aspx>

#### **10. RIDE invites comments on in Title I waiver requests**

Please see this notice from our Division of Accountability and Quality Assurance:

The U. S. Department of Education has discretion to grant waivers of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) statutory and regulatory requirements under section 9401 of that act. The Interim Secretary of Education recently allowed State Education Agencies (SEAs) to submit request for waivers of certain Title I Section 1003(g) requirements for School Improvement Grants (SIG) to persistently lowest-achieving schools.

This notice is to inform you of the opportunity you have to comment on the waiver requests RIDE has submitted as part of our Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2010 application for SIG funds.

The waiver requests seeks a waiver of the requirements set forth in section 1003(g)(4) of the ESEA and Section II.B.1 of the final requirements for the SIG. This waiver seeks to enable RIDE to receive its FFY 2010 allocation of SIG G funds and to carry those funds forward into the next competition. The School Year 2011-12 competition will begin after federal approval of the Rhode Island SIG grant application and approval of the waiver request. A copy of the waiver letter will be available on the RIDE Web site and will be transmitted to superintendents and other stakeholders by e-mail.

Comments on the Rhode Island request for waivers should be submitted by e-mail to Jennifer Smith, at [Jennifer.Smith@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Jennifer.Smith@ride.ri.gov), no later than September 6.

We will send this memo to Title I directors and the Committee of Practitioners.

***From the U.S. Department of Education:***

#### **11. Districts, schools reminded of requirements on education for children in foster care**

Please see this joint letter from the Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:

As of September 30, 2010, there were 260,558 children in foster care aged 5-17 years. These children stay in foster care an average of a little more than two years (Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau 2010). We can all appreciate that these children face many disruptions in their lives as they are removed from their families and placed in out-of-home care. To mitigate the impact of these disruptions, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) want to do everything we can to support children in foster care. To that end, we are writing to you today to ensure that

you are aware of the requirements of Public Law (P.L.) 110–351, the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act (Fostering Connections Act), and to encourage you to share this information with your local educational agencies (LEAs). We also ask that you urge LEAs to share the following information with their schools and with local stakeholders as well as with county child welfare agencies to ensure coordination across different agencies and programs.

The Fostering Connections Act, enacted in 2008, made several changes to parts B and E of Title IV of the Social Security Act (IV-B and IV-E) in order to improve outcomes for children in foster care. When a child is placed in foster care, it may mean changing schools once or several times, which can negatively affect the child's education. By the 6th grade, students who change schools four or more times lose approximately one year of educational growth (Kerbow 1996). Additionally, in a national study of 1,087 foster care alumni, youth who had one fewer placement change per year (than other children in foster care) were almost twice as likely to graduate from high school before leaving care (Pecora 2003). Therefore, the law requires that child welfare agencies include actions in case plans to ensure educational stability for foster children. In addition, the law requires that child welfare agencies ensure foster children's full-time enrollment in an elementary or secondary school, a home school, or an authorized independent study program (unless the child is incapable of attending school full time due to a medical condition). The law specifically requires that at the time of a child's initial placement, child welfare agencies coordinate with LEAs to ensure that children can remain in their current school, thereby keeping them connected with teachers, other family members including siblings, and friends and helping them continue to progress in their school work, unless doing so is not in the best interests of those children (for example, for safety reasons). To facilitate this continuity, the Fostering Connections Act requires the placement of a child in foster care to take into account the proximity to the school in which the child is enrolled at the time of placement, and allows federal Title IV-E dollars to be used to pay for the cost of transportation to the child's original school, for children in foster care who meet federal Title IV-E eligibility criteria. When making a foster placement and arranging appropriate educational services, agencies also need to comply with other applicable federal laws, including, but not limited to, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (P.L. 93-380) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (P.L. 108-446).

Since the Fostering Connections Act requires that child welfare agencies provide assurances that they have coordinated with appropriate LEAs, this letter also provides links to resources for child welfare agencies, State educational agencies, and LEAs seeking examples of practices that address the educational stability needs of foster children.

The Web site of the National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections (NRCPPFC) provides some examples of education and child welfare collaborations in support of the Fostering Connections Act and can be accessed at:

[http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/info\\_services/download/ChildWelfareandEducation2pgr.pdf](http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/info_services/download/ChildWelfareandEducation2pgr.pdf).

The NRCPPFC at Hunter College School of Social Work is a training, technical assistance, and information services organization dedicated to helping to strengthen the capacity of State, local, tribal, and other publicly administered or supported child welfare agencies to institutionalize a safety-focused, family-centered, and community-based approach to meeting the needs of children, youth, and families. It is a service of the Children's Bureau, which is a division of HHS's Administration for Children and Families. We ask that child welfare agencies, in partnership with their State and appropriate LEAs, make use of this resource.

We encourage States and LEAs to develop or review and, if appropriate, revise their policies and guidelines for serving children in foster care. In order to minimize the disruptions to education that can come from being placed in foster care, we also encourage State educational agencies, LEAs, and child welfare agencies to collaborate during this process and to publicize these policies and guidelines so that school administrators, teachers, social workers, and parents understand and can replicate and reinforce your efforts to increase the educational success of foster children. We urge child welfare agencies to collaborate with LEAs on policies and procedures to ensure that foster children remain in and receive transportation to their school of origin in cases where this is in the best interest of the foster child, using federal Title IV-E dollars and other available resources for such purposes. To ensure that children in foster care have as stable an educational experience as possible in the upcoming school year, States and LEAs should have any revised policies and guidelines in place as soon as is feasible.

As you develop, review, or revise your policies on serving children in foster care, you may find helpful a list of State laws that have been passed in support of the Fostering Connections Act at the following Web site:

[www.fosteringconnections.org](http://www.fosteringconnections.org).

You can also find examples of State and tribal approaches related to implementing the new law, and you can search by state:

[http://www.fosteringconnections.org/resources/topic\\_approaches?id=0002](http://www.fosteringconnections.org/resources/topic_approaches?id=0002).

From November 3 to 4, 2011, in Arlington, Virginia, ED and HHS will co-host a Foster Care and Education National Meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to bring states, including the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, together to discuss how to implement Fostering Connections in a manner that promotes educational stability and improves educational outcomes for foster children. During this meeting, State teams composed of members from the State's child welfare, education, and court systems will create a State plan for cross-system collaboration to be implemented following the conference. All conference attendees will have access to additional technical assistance, such as webinars, on topics related to the Fostering Connections Act leading up to this national meeting.

Thank you for your assistance as we collectively work to ensure that children in foster care receive the highest quality education. Again, please share this letter with your LEAs and urge them to share it with their school officials (including principals and school



social workers) and other local stakeholders. Schools are often the most important source of focus and stability for children in foster care, and your response will be greatly appreciated by the child welfare agency personnel who serve children in foster care.

***From other federal agencies:***

**12. Schools invited to enter Missing Children's Day Poster Contest**

Please see this message from Shaina Y. Glover, of the Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention:

The 2011 National Missing Children's Day Poster Contest was an outstanding contest emphasizing local efforts to educate our children on safety issues.

I invite you to join us again in our efforts to educate children across the country about safety issues by giving your 5<sup>th</sup>-grade students an opportunity to participate in the 2012 contest. The theme for the poster contest is "Bring Our Missing Children Home."

The national winner will be announced at the annual National Missing Children's Day Ceremony in Washington, D.C. The winner of this national contest, along with his or her teacher and parents, is flown to Washington to attend this special ceremony.

Local schools participating in the event will have the opportunity to submit their winning poster for judging at the state level. Your State Missing Children's Clearinghouse (or an organization designated by your clearinghouse) will develop and coordinate the process for your statewide competition. Each Missing Children's Clearinghouse will then submit the single winning state poster to the Department of Justice for final judging.

We sincerely hope to have all states and territories participate in the contest this year. Many states are constrained by the economy and other issues that have closed schools. But as we all know, the safety of our children is of great importance to all of us. With your help, we hope to increase state participation this year and to make this year's competition the best ever.

If you have any questions or need additional information about this important national contest, please send an e-mail to:

[mc.day@fvtc.edu](mailto:mc.day@fvtc.edu).

For further information:

- Retrieve contest information at:  
<http://www.ojjdp.gov/programs/postercontest/index.html>.
- Contact your state poster contest manager. You may find this information online at: <http://www.ojjdp.gov/programs/postercontest/index.html>.

***Other:***

### **13. Teachers invited to participate in survey on teacher preparation**

Please see this invitation from the National Council on Teacher Quality, which is inviting all Rhode Island teachers to participate in its survey on teacher-preparation programs:

Earlier this month the National Council on Teacher Quality launched a survey of teachers regarding their experience in teacher-preparation programs. The main purpose of this survey is to begin to engage teachers in a conversation about teacher preparation. They are teacher preparation's main "customers," after all. We thought that by doing so, we could learn more about what themes we should emphasize in the final report and gain allies for the review. In any discussion of teacher preparation quality, their voice will carry far.

So far, more than 2,600 people have taken the survey. Over 80 percent of those who responded agree that a national review is necessary, which is encouraging. We're aiming to get 5,000 respondents by the end of the month.

We have made use of some lists of teacher e-mail addresses from work that we do with districts as well as e-mail blasts from allies (including union representatives on our advisory board). We would encourage all Rhode Island teachers to participate in this survey. To do so, go to:

<http://svy.mk/ngVwx5>

***RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:***

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/fieldmemos/default.aspx>